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THE WEEPING GOD

Primitive peoples, practising agriculture in regions subject to drought, have always striven to find some means of regulating the rain-supply either by coercive magic or by propitiation of the powers supposed to preside over the weather. The more or less cultured races of America were no exception to this rule, but evolved numerous elaborate ceremonies whereby they hoped to ensure a successful harvest. However, the rain-god in America was not entirely a benefactor ; almost all the more civilized peoples of this continent dwelt within the tropics, and tropical rain is apt to be excessive and is usually accompanied by thunder. The rain-god therefore is also the thunder-god, the god who smites, as well as the beneficent fertilizer of the fields. Thus among the Araucanians, the more settled groups of whom seem to have practised agriculture even before their northern tribes fell under Inca influence, a god named Pillan was adored, who manifested himself in lightning and thunder and in the fire and smoke of volcanoes[1].

Among the Diaguite people of north-west Argentina, the thunder-god ranked next in importance to the sun[2].

Uiracocha, the old pre-Inca creator-god of southern Peru and Bolivia, was in particular lord of the thunder, a fact which appears plainly in the lines of the following hymn preserved by Molina[3] :—'Thou who givest life and strength to mankind, saying, let this be a man, and, let this be a woman ; and as thou sayest so thou givest life

[1] A. II. 26. [2] Q. VI. ch. 23. [3] B. p. 28.

and vouchsafest that men shall live in health and peace and free from danger! Thou who dwellest in the heights of heaven, in the thunder and in the storm-clouds, hear us and grant us eternal life!'

Under the Inca *régime* the thunder, Illapa, was regarded as sufficiently important to have a special shrine within the precincts of the famous sun-temple at Cuzco[1]; and in the country districts, offerings were made to it under the name of Libiac, in connection with the crops[2].

Among the Chibcha in Colombia, however, the rather meagre accounts which we possess of the local religion seem to imply that the sun was regarded as the fertilizing god; at any rate the ceremonies in connection with the harvest were held in honour of this deity, and sacrifices were made to him upon mountain-tops in times of drought[3].

Of the beliefs of the tribes inhabiting the region between Colombia and the Maya-Quiché peoples very little is known, except that among the Nahua-speaking tribes of Nicaragua, emigrants at an early date from Mexico, one of the chief gods was Quiateotl, god of rain, lightning and thunder, to whom young boys and girls were sacrificed in order to obtain rain for the crops[4].

To pass to Guatemala, it is recorded that the chief god of the Quiché proper was the thunder-god and fire-maker, Tohil[5] or Totohil[6]. And in the Popol-Vuh, the sacred book of the Quiché, Hurakan, one of the early creator-gods is styled the 'Heart of Heaven,' and the thunder and lightning are assigned to him as his particular attributes[7]. Moreover among the Maya of Yucatan the god (or rather gods, for there were several) of agriculture, thunder and lightning, was named Chac[8].

Among the Mexicans, the rain-god was Tlaloc, who, like the Maya Chac, with his attendant Chacs, was aided

[1] C. 1. p. 275.
[2] O. p. 16.
[3] D. p. 73.
[4] S. p. 40.
[5] R. 215.
[6] E. §§ 20 and 90.
[7] R. p. 9.
[8] F. 1. p. 317.

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in his duties by a number of subsidiary Tlaloque. The latter were believed to distribute the rain, which was stored in large vases in Tlaloc's palace, by means of smaller vessels, and to cause thunder by striking the latter with rods which they also carried[1].

But Tlaloc was not the only member of the Mexican pantheon who was connected with the thunder. The Ciuapipiltin, or Ciuatateo, the souls of women who had died in child-birth, who escorted the sun on his westward journey from the zenith to the horizon, were lightning-demons[2]; and the dog-shaped god of twins and deformities, Xolotl, the escort of the sun to the underworld, was also connected with the lightning[3].

Again, the early population of the Greater Antilles, known usually as Tainan, practised agriculture to some extent, and performed various ceremonies to obtain the favour of the rain- and wind-gods who were supposed to preside over cultivation[4].

In coming nearer to the particular point which this paper is intended to illustrate, it will be best first to consider the details of the festival held by the Mexicans in the month of Atlacahualco in honour of the rain-god Tlaloc[5]. A number of children were sacrificed on this occasion; the small victims were richly clad and escorted in litters with song and dance to a mountain where their hearts were offered up in the usual manner. The object of the sacrifice was to ensure plenty of rain, and it was considered a good omen if the victims wept during their journey to the place of sacrifice. The association of tears with rain is a fairly obvious piece of symbolism, and it appears to have existed throughout practically the whole of inter-tropical America, but in most cases it is the tears of the god himself which represent the rain.

The most celebrated of the megalithic ruins at Tiahuanaco on the Bolivian plateau is a monolithic doorway

[1] G. p. 618. [2] H. III. p. 606. [3] H. III. p. 607.
[4] K. pp. 54—56. [5] L. p. 58.

with a frieze in relief sculptured along the lintel. The design consists of a large central figure, flanked on either side by three rows of smaller figures carved in profile. The central figure is shown in Fig. 1, and represents a rather conventionalized human form with two ornamental bands, enclosing circles, running from his eyes down his cheeks. I have elsewhere suggested that these represent tears[1], and since the site of Tiahuanaco was particularly associated in Peruvian legend with the creator-god Uira-cocha, it is probable that here we have a representation of that deity. If that is so, the weeping eyes form a fitting attribute of the god who dwells 'in the thunder and in the storm-clouds,' and represent the rain, just as the spear-thrower and darts which he holds in his hands symbolize the lightning. It is worthy of note that when the peculiar art of Tiahuanaco penetrated to the coast, figures of this very god, with the same attributes, appeared upon the local pottery (Fig. 2). That the tears were considered an essential attribute is evident from the fact that they are faithfully reproduced, though, apparently, no rain-god was worshipped in this locality. The reason for the absence of a rain-god lay in the fact that rain fell only about once in six years on the coast, and the coastal agriculturists were dependant upon the moisture provided by the frequent sea-mists, and, to a greater degree, upon an elaborate system of irrigation by which water was brought great distances from the mountains. Similar 'tears' appear on the cheeks of the smaller subsidiary figures of the frieze, who may be identified as votaries dressed in the livery of their god[2]. The scene, viewed in this light, is a remarkable parallel to one of the big Chibcha festivals, which took place at the harvest, and in which a number of men took part wearing masks on which tears were painted[3]. The chronicler states that these tears were meant as an appeal to the pity of the Sun, but he may well have misunderstood the true meaning; one feels

[1] M. pp. 187—8. [2] See M. p. 172. [3] D. p. 68.

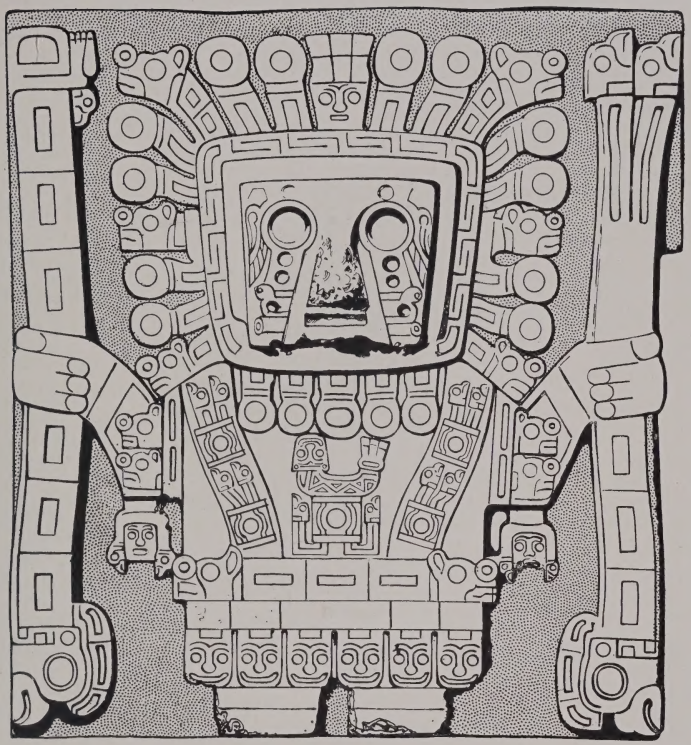

FIG. 1. CENTRAL FIGURE FROM THE MONOLITHIC GATEWAY, TIAHUANACO, BOLIVIA
(*by kind permission of the Medici Society*)

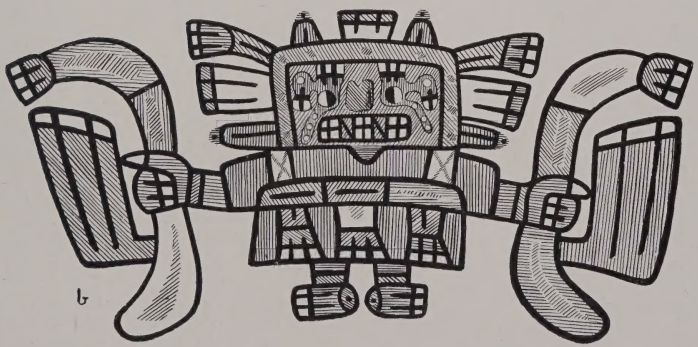

FIG. 2. VASE-PAINTING PACASMAYO VALLEY, PERU
(*by kind permission of the Medici Society*)

To face p. 368

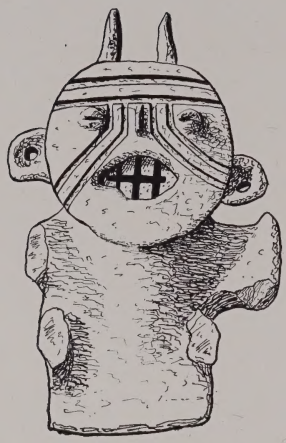

FIG. 3. POTTERY FIGURE FROM THE SACRED LAKE OF GUATABITA, COLOMBIA (BRITISH MUSEUM)

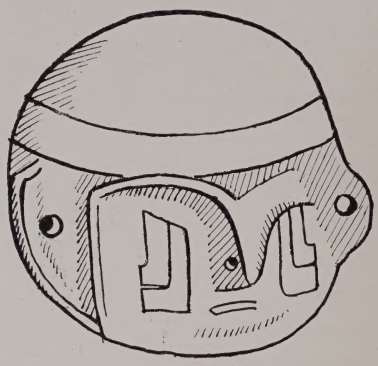

FIG. 4. POTTERY HEAD FROM A VASE, ECUADOR (AFTER GONZALEZ SUAREZ)

FIG. 5. PAINTED POTTERY FROM THE CALCHAQUI REGION; ARGENTINA
(by kind permission of the Medici Society)

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more inclined to regard them in the light of imitative magic like the tears of the children sacrificed to Tlaloc. An interesting vase from the sacred lake of Guatabita is shown in Fig. 3. It represents a masked man, and the engraved lines running down the cheeks may well be meant for tears. Fig. 4 shows a pottery head from a vase found in Ecuador, and here again the weeping eye is clearly shown.

But for a more interesting parallel we must go further south, to the area of Diaguite culture in north-west Argentina. Here, mainly in the Calchaqui and Yocavil valleys, whole cemeteries have been discovered devoted to very young children whose remains have been deposited in pottery urns decorated with painted ornament. The painting in very many cases represents a highly-conventionalized human figure, from the corners of whose eyes tears are shown streaming (Fig. 5). Such urns, including those not in human form, generally bear representations of the two-headed lightning-snake. Now urn-burial is extremely rare among the people of the Andes, and this fact combined with the further fact that only the bodies of young children are found in such cemeteries, gives the latter a character peculiarly their own. No suggestion has been made to explain them, but I think that it is possible to put forward a reasonable solution in the light of the following points. (1) The Mexicans sacrificed young children on mountains to Tlaloc to ensure a sufficiency of rain for the crops. (2) The Chibcha also sacrificed young children on mountains to the sun in times of drought[1]. (3) The only other instances of urn-burial recorded in the Andine region (which cannot be traced to extraneous influence) are, firstly among the Puruha of Ecuador, who are said to have sacrificed their first-born children and preserved the bodies in vases of stone or metal[2]; and (4) secondly among the Peruvians, who, in some localities regarded one individual of twin

[1] D. 73. [2] N. XVIII. 166.

children as the child of the lightning, and preserved the bodies of twins who died young in vases in their huts[1]. (5) Of particular interest in view of the last point is the fact that the god Xolotl, a lightning-god, was regarded by the Mexicans as the especial god of twins[2]. I think it is not too rash to suggest, therefore, that the children whose bodies are found interred in urns in the Diaguite area were sacrifices to the thunder-god, who we know was worshipped in that region, and whose portrait with weeping eyes is shown on the exterior of so many of the vessels; and further that they were sacrificed in order to secure the rain so necessary for the crops. A good representation of the weeping god of this region is seen in the fine copper plaque, found at Catamarca, illustrated in Fig. 6. Here the tears are particularly noticeable.

If we turn to the remains of the Tainan (pre-Carib) population of the Antilles, we find again the weeping god. Actual idols relating to this culture are rare, but two wooden figures, obtained in Jamaica in the eighteenth century and now in the British Museum, show deeply-cut grooves, leading from the eye down the cheek, which were formerly emphasized by inlay, probably of shell. The head of one of these figures (which are figured in the Journal of the R. Anthrop. Inst., vol. xxxvii. Pls. xlviii. and xlix.) is shown in Fig. 7. A stone pestle (*loc. cit.* pl. liv.) shows similar face-grooves. These figures probably represent the sky-god or the rain-gods or spirits who are known to have played an important part in the religious beliefs of the Tainan.

To come now to Central America. I have mentioned that the Quiché of Guatemala worshipped a thunder-god, Tohil, and it is a significant fact that Las Casas writes of a god with weeping eyes, who was adored in many parts of that country[3]. Fig. 8 shows an interesting and well-carved stone head, found at Santa Lucia Cozumalhuapa (now in the Museum für Völkerkunde at Berlin), and the

[1] O. pp. 16—17. [2] P. 20. [3] H. I. p. 472.

FIG. 6. COPPER PLAQUE, CATAMARCA, ARGENTINA
(by kind permission of the Medici Society).

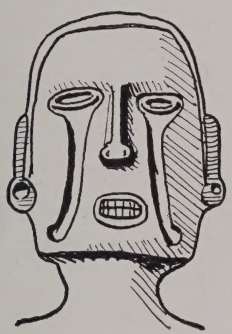

FIG. 7. HEAD OF A WOODEN IDOL FROM JAMAICA (BRITISH MUSEUM)

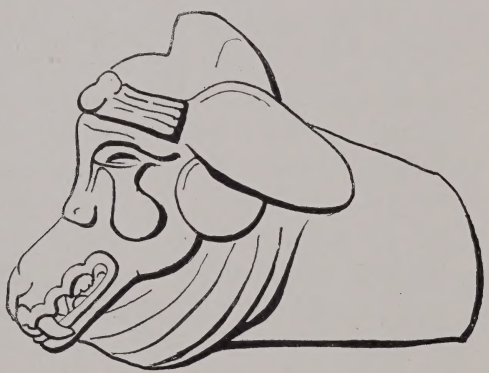

FIG. 8. STONE HEAD FROM SANTA LUCIA COZUMALHUAPA (AFTER SELER)

FIG. 9. (a) CHAC (*Codex Troano* 24); (b) *IK* GLYPH; (c) DITTO; (d) DITTO; (e) CHAC GLYPH

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weeping eye is very clearly shown in this specimen. The combination of a human face with a beast's snout recalls the representations of the Maya rain-snake deity, called Ah Bolon Tz'acab, who is so frequently figured in the Dresden and Troano-Cortesianus MSS, and who possesses many parallels in the carvings of Palenque, Copan and Quirigua. The Maya rain-gods, or Chac, also exhibit certain animal characteristics, such as a snout-like nose and long teeth (see Fig. 9A), but it is the hieroglyph expressing these deities which brings us back again to the weeping eye (Fig. 9E). It is difficult to see what an eye of this form can be but the conventional representation of an eye such as that of the stone head, Fig. 8. Again, this form of eye, seen in the Chac glyph, is remarkably similar to the glyph of the second day-sign, *ik*, as seen in the Maya monuments (Fig. 9B). In the manuscripts this sign has a number of variants, the simplest form being shown in Fig. 9C, one of the more complicated in Fig. 9D, but all of them suggest an eyelid with one or more tears falling from it. That it may reasonably be so interpreted is obvious from a consideration of Fig. 9A, where we have a Chac figure bearing a shield on which this device is twice repeated (Troano MS, p. 24). Now the word *ik* does not mean rain it is true, but wind, and the sign thus corresponds to the Mexican second day-sign, *eecatl*, which is the name of Quetzalcoatl as the wind-god. In the Ixil dialect of Guatemala the word is *caki'k*, which Seler explains as a contraction of *Chac-ik-ak*, 'Chac-wind,' *i.e.* rain-wind[1]. Now Quetzalcoatl as Eecatl was essentially the rain-wind ; Sahagun states of this deity that 'He was believed to be charged with the duty of sweeping the road for the rain-gods, and the reason for the belief was that before the rain bursts, much wind and dust is seen. It was Quetzalcoatl, the god of the winds, who thus swept the roads for the gods of the rain.'[2] Quetzalcoatl therefore as Eecatl was intimately connected with the rain-

[1] H. I. p. 453. [2] L. p. 15.

and thunder-god Tlaloc, the Mexican equivalent of Chac, and as such is very frequently shown with what I believe to be a weeping eye (see Fig. 10). My assumption gains strength when it is realized that Quetzalcoatl is only so depicted when he appears in the form of Eecatl. It is true that Tlaloc himself is not shown with the weeping eye, but then he wears a rather elaborate mask the eyes of which are surrounded with snakes, and the snake is the emblem of rain and lightning throughout almost the whole of America. The peculiar snouty mouth-mask invariably worn by Eecatl recalls the form of the stone head with the weeping eye from Guatemala, illustrated in Fig. 8.

But Quetzalcoatl is not the only deity who is distinguished by this form of eye; it is seen also in the representations of the Ciuapipiltin, who, as said above, were lightning-spirits (see Fig. 11), and of some manifestations of Xolotl, another lightning-god (*e.g.* Nanauatzin, Codex Borgia 10). Again, the rain-tear is not confined to the sinister weather-deities, but appears also as a distinguishing mark of some of the gods of fertility. Xochipilli, whose name is explained by Sahagun in the words 'que quiere decir el principal que dá flores ó, que tiene cargo de dar flores,'[1] is said by the same author in his Mexican text (translated by Seler[2]) to be painted red and to bear on his cheeks painted tears (Fig. 12). The maize-god, both among the Mexicans and Maya is also distinguished by an angled line drawn vertically across the eye and down the cheek, which may be a variety of this tear face-paint. At any rate we get the regular weeping eye in the figure of the central deity, a moon-goddess, pictured in the maize-house of the west in the Codex Borgia, p. 43 (see Fig. 13), and the connection of the moon-deities with vegetation was very close in Mexico. Curiously enough this deity is also furnished with a beast's snout like that of the Guatemalan stone head, Fig. 8.

[1] H. II. p. 499. [2] H. II. p. 498.

FIG. 10. QUETZALCOATL AS EECATL (*Codex Vaticanus* B 34)

FIG. 11. CIUAPIPILTIN (*Codex Borgia* 48)

FIG. 12. XOCHIPILLI (*Codex Vaticanus* B 35)

FIG. 13. HEAD OF THE MOON-GODDESS IN THE MAIZE-HOUSE (*Codex Borgia* 43)

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The theme is capable of further elaboration, but I prefer to limit myself to instances in which I think the case is reasonably clear. The result is not of astonishing importance, being in the main a substantiation of the opening paragraphs of the paper, paragraphs which perhaps hardly required substantiation. But I think one or two additional points make their appearance, among them the fact that the vegetation-spirit which has been made to play such an important part in the folk-beliefs of the Old World was of comparatively little account in ancient America (though the *Zaramama*, or 'maize-mother,' and *Cocamama* or 'coca-mother,' were features of Peruvian peasant ceremonies[1]). The Americans for the most part sought a further cause in the sky-gods, the deities of rain, wind and thunder; moreover these deities were two-faced, if they could create they could also destroy, for the rain which fertilized was inseparable from the thunder which smote. But perhaps the most interesting aspect of the question is the psychological. The Mexican and Maya cultures show so many points of similarity that one more is of little account. When however it is seen that the conception of a weeping god, lord of the rain, wind and thunder, whose functions are both creative and destructive, prevailed from Mexico to Chile and north-west Argentina, and from Guatemala to the Greater Antilles, an important link is established between the cultures of inter-tropical America. This link may be forged of nothing more than a community of thought, but even so it affords strong evidence that the various manifestations of ancient American culture possessed at least a common psychological element.

T. A. Joyce.

[1] O. p. 16.

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